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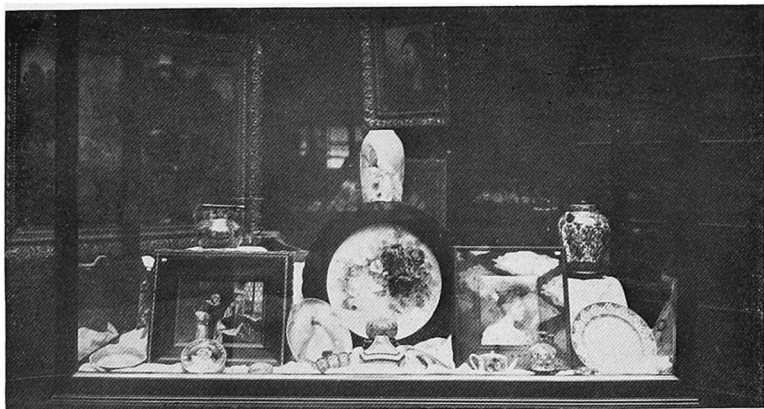
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CERAMICS  
By Chicago Artists

## DECORATIVE WORK ON CHINA

It has been one of the crying defects of present-day ceramics that the artists have aimed only to be decorative, to give a pleasing effect to bowl, plaque, or vase. It seems to have been assumed that almost any popular picture—originally painted without any thought or expectation that it would one day grace the outside of a bit of pottery—would look well under glaze. It was easier for both amateurs and professionals to be copyists than originators, and the ceramic artists sinned—sinned grievously—in being content to copy instead of trying to work out something original.

There were so many stock conventional patterns to be had for the seeking; so many "suitable" heads—Dutch peasants, court beauties, Indian chiefs, monks more mundane than spiritual, and maidens more spirituelle than real—that could be made to fit a plate bottom or a pitcher side; so many combinations of flowers and fruit procurable as "studies" for a mere pittance at the stores, that even ceramic artists who had it in them to do better, yielded to the temptation of trying to beat Rembrandt and Gainsborough at their own game, and put miniature copies of their masterpieces on mugs and butter-dishes, or undertook to make approved bunches of Jacque roses, tulips, and peonies blush securely under a vitrified surface.

That there is an effort being made on the part of our best china-painters to break away from the leading-strings of mere copyism, and produce something new and unique, is manifest. Every exhibition gives some evidence of this move in the right direction; the only

regret is that the evidence is not more ample. One tires of seeing stock subjects reproduced *ad nauseam* on pottery, and welcomes something, however simple, in the way of decoration that betrays a grain of individuality if not originality on the part of the painter. In the line of ceramics the market has been glutted with things indifferent or things pretty. What we want is work with a dash of life and spirit, conceptions with some force and boldness, designs that disclose some constructive—architectural, it has been called—ability.

All this is apropos of the recent exhibition of the Chicago Ceramic Art Association. It had a wealth of the merely pretty, as all such exhibitions have, and not a little that would meet the requirements of the most rigid stickler for good, strong, individual work. Two hundred and forty-six pieces were shown. It ill behooves one to be censorious, but from the standpoint of an exhibition of representative work perhaps one hundred and forty-six would make a better showing. Despite the excellence of much of the work, doubtless many visitors would be content with the forty-six.

This is not meant to be harsh criticism. I merely wish to suggest the desirability of ceramic associations having a standard of excellence



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and rigidly adhering to it, to the exclusion of much that may be pleasing and fairly well executed, but still lacking in the elements of originality and character. There is need of competent and inexorable juries of admission. In other words, an exhibition should be either a sales show, into which everything is admitted to meet the tastes and purses of possible purchasers, or it should be a display of the most meritorious work. If the former, one had better call them simply



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"sales"; if the latter, one could dispense with everything suggestive of paucity of ideas or deficiency of technique.

As an exponent of the better tendency in ceramics here advocated, one cannot well overpraise D. M. Campana. His figures are admirable, and his draftsmanship, color, texture, give evidence of a true artist well trained. His work is the sort we demand of artists outside the pale of ceramics, and very naturally we find pleasure in it. It is not imitative, but bold, free, with spirit and force. His plaque "Sighs of the Pond," showing a woman's face thrust out from the water and kissing two butterflies, is eminently original in conception.

In sharp contrast with these pieces are the examples of Professor

Franz J. Schwarz's work. These are all exceedingly well done in point of technique, but they are of the sort that attract a casual glance and elicit a word of admiration, but after all do not command close study. Josephine, Titian's daughter, the Madonna, Marie Antoinette, Judith, are all stock subjects, and have not the vital interest of original conceptions.

Between this refinement in working over old ideas or relinishing old faces and the ambitious seeking of expression for new conceptions or ideals, there is in the Chicago Ceramic Association, as evidenced by its exhibitions, the widest possible range of talent and the greatest diversity of aims. Many of the members are to be commended for their successful ventures in design and coloring, which put on their work something of the stamp of individuality. Others seem to be enamored of the merely pretty and hopelessly lacking in personality.

In lieu of more detailed reference to exhibitors and exhibits, one may enumerate the following as among the most important pieces shown by the association, apart from those already mentioned by Campana and Schwarz: Mrs. Clarke, large vase, with asters in tones of purple and white; Mrs. R. M. McCreery, large vase, pink and yellow roses; chocolate pot, conventional blue and gold; toast cup, with portraits; Mrs. E. Beachey, large plaques, conventional, rich in color; Mr. Aulich, large vase, roses; Mrs. H. T. Wright, pitcher, conventional; Miss Iglehart, head, excellently treated; Mrs. Jenkins, jardinière, geraniums in green and red tones; Miss Adelaide L. Lyster, tankard (grapes) and salad bowl, in conventional design; Mr. E. Donath, vase, poppies, red tones; Mrs. A. Frazee, hot-water pot, pomegranate decoration, conventional design, green and red; monk playing guitar; porcelain panel; Mrs. A. B. Crane, jardinière, with sunflower; vase, with storks in violet tones; Mrs. Cross, glass pitcher, blue chrysanthemum decoration; Persian decorated glass vase in transparent deep blue enamel; Miss May Armstrong, flower pot in soft brown tones; Miss Mary Phillips, teapot, conventional pinks and greens; hot water pot, charmingly done.

EDITH PHILLIPS WISEMAN.



## RECENT WORK OF ILLUSTRATORS— JOSEPH PENNELL

The following three plates are thoroughly representative of the best of the recent work of Joseph Pennell, whose remarkable pictures of Old World scenery and architecture have placed him in the front rank of illustrators of this class of subject. Their dainty, etching-like effect will be appreciated by the reader.